entire Pakistan Army including the troops which were earlier guarding Pakistan-Afghanistan border have moved close to the Indo-Pakistan border and taken up positions. Indian Army has taken up a suitable defensive posture to ensure security of our borders. Pakistan Army activities are constantly being monitored and a high state of vigil is being maintained.

Administration of oath to recruits in the Armed Forces

644. SHRI KULDIP NAYYAR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a practice still continues in the Armed Forces to administer oath to the recruits on their respective religious books and not the Constitution;

(b) if so, how long has this practice been in existence; and

(c) whether there is a proposal to change it and when?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) There is no practice in the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy to administer oath to the recruits on their respective religious books. In the Indian Army, the recruits are required to take their oath of allegiance, swear in the name of God in accordance with the tenets of individual religion to abide by the Constitution of India.

(b) Does not arise in the case of the Indian Air Force and the Navy. For the Indian Army, this is a historical practice.

(c) Does not arise in the case of Indian Air Force and the Navy. There is no proposal to change the practice for the Indian Army.

Class IV employees who died in harness under office of Chief Engineer, Bareilly Zone

645. SHRI ANIL SHARMA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of class IV employees who died in harness since 1995 under the Office of Chief Engineer, Bareilly Zone of the Headquarters Central Command;

(b) whether all the claimants have been appointed on compassionate ground;

(c) if not, the number thereof and reasons for not appointing them on compassionate ground; and

(d) what is the policy and guidelines in this regard and whether monitoring is being done to ensure that families of deceased employees do not suffer for long period?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) 94 class IV employees have died in harness since 1995 under the Office of Chief Engineer, Bareilly Zone of HQrs Central Command. Out of these 56 claimants have been appointed on compassionate grounds in accordance with the policy guidelines on the subject.

The policy guidelines related to appointment on compassionate grounds have been laid down by DOP&T *vide* its O.M. No. 14014 / 6 / 94-Estt(D) dated 9th October, 1998 keeping in view the orders of Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in various cases. Compassionate appointments can be made up to a maximum of 5% of Direct Recruitment vacancies in a recruitment year in Group 'C' and 'D' posts only.

Compassionate appointment is not a matter of right. It is meant to help the family of a deceased government servant to tide over the financial crisis due to the sudden demise of Government servant. Accordingly, the deserving applicants are selected by a Board of Officers on the basis of a criteria of awarding marks on various aspects of pecuniary position of the family of a deceased Government servant which, *inter-alia*, include amount of family pension, terminals benefits, property and earnings there from, number of earning members in the family, number of dependent children and number of unmarried daughers etc. All possible efforts are made to offer appointments to the deserving applicants. Directions have been issued to finalize all cases of appointment on compassionate grounds wihin over year.

Indian PoW's in Pakistan

646. SHRI S. AGNIRAJ: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) how many Indian PoW's are presently in Pakistan;

(b) how long they are being detained in Pakistan;

(c) what are the reasons for such a long detention of these PoW's;